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ABSTRACT

This executive summary of Georgia Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites (GA READS) includes the Reading Excellence overview; Georgia's plan and goals; state activities; a timeline; local activities; and a budget. The overview states that the Reading Excellence Act was authorized to carry out the following purposes: teach every child to read by the end of third grade; provide children in early childhood with the readiness skills and support they need to learn to read once they enter school; expand the number of high quality family literacy programs; provide early intervention to children who are at risk of being identified for special education inappropriately; and base instruction, including tutoring, on scientifically based reading research. The overview also details the use of funds and the key principles in the Reading Excellence Act. The State Activities section explains the role of partnership in grant application; the composition of the reading and literacy partnership; professional development; and grants to local educational agencies. A timeline outlines activities from October 2001 through June 2004. (PM)

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ED 468 086

Executive Summary

Georgia Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites
(GA READS)

I. Reading Excellence Program Overview
II. Georgia's Plan and Goals
III. State Activities
IV. Timeline
V. Local Activities
VI. Budget

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I. The Reading Excellence Program
(Overview of the Federal Program)

The Reading Excellence Act was authorized to carry out the following purposes:

- Teach every child to read by the end of third grade.
- Provide children in early childhood with the readiness skills and support they need to learn to read once they enter school.
- Expand the number of high quality family literacy programs.
- Provide early intervention to children who are at risk of being identified for special education inappropriately.
- Base instruction, including tutoring, on scientifically-based reading research.

The law was passed for two major reasons. First, in recent years, findings from scientifically based reading research have provided compelling guidance for improved reading practice. Second, national assessments have continued to show great need for improving reading instruction in many schools, especially high poverty schools. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows serious deficiencies in children's ability to read. Even in wealthier schools, almost a quarter of fourth-graders are unable to reach NAEP's basic level. More than two-thirds of fourth-graders in high poverty schools are unable to reach the basic level.

The Act authorizes competitive Reading and Literacy Grants to state education agencies, which in turn distribute the funding to eligible local education agencies through a competitive process.

Only selected districts and schools are eligible for Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrants. Basically the intent of the Act is to provide funds to very needy districts and schools. The state education agency holds a competition for two-year subgrants among the following districts:

- Title I school improvement status. All districts that have at least one school identified for school improvement under section 1116(c) of Title I, ESEA. (ED's Title I office approves which schools are in school improvement. The main criterion is that a Title I school is identified for school improvement if for two consecutive years it has failed to make adequate progress in meeting the state's student performance standards, as defined in the state's plan.)

- High poverty numbers. The two districts with the largest or second largest number of children in the state counted for the Title I formula under section 1124(c).
- High poverty rate. The two districts with the highest or second highest poverty rate of school-age children in comparison to other LEAs in the state.

In turn, successful districts allocate funding to some or all of the schools that are in Title I school improvement status, have the highest or second highest number of poor children in the LEA, or have the highest or second highest percent of poor children in the LEA.

States must allow all eligible districts to compete for the funding. The SEA may place some limits on the percent of schools that can be served or can add criteria such as priority for schools that have greater need or have fewer resources from outside grants. Districts need not select every eligible school and may select from among those eligible, taking into account local needs. However, the SEA's review will assess the district's choices.

Uses of Funds

The LRI subgrants provide support to local educational agencies to advance reform of reading instruction in participating schools. This must include, among other activities:

- improving the reading instruction practice of teachers and other instructional staff through professional development based on scientifically based reading research,
- carrying out family literacy services (e.g., parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult training, and parent education), and
- providing early literacy intervention to children experiencing reading difficulties, including kindergarten transition programs.

Key features include the requirements that the LEA will base the project's activities on scientifically based reading research and will enter into an agreement with experts on the particular reading approaches being implemented.

Also, the LEA must form a partnership with one or more community-based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness in early childhood literacy and reading readiness, reading instruction, and reading achievement in carrying out the project's activities, or describe why such a partnership is not feasible. The funds may be

used for the following activities, all of which must be provided, although not necessarily with REA funds:

- Research-based reading instruction in grades K-3
- Reading instruction to children with reading difficulties
- High quality professional development for classroom teachers and other instructional staff
- Curriculum and supportive materials
- Tutoring and other reading support services during non-instructional time
- Training for tutors
- Kindergarten transition
- Family literacy services (parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education)
- Parent training to help their children with reading
- Technical assistance
- Promotion of reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading materials
- Coordination of local reading, library, and literacy programs and others supported by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Administrative costs

Key Principles in the Reading Excellence Act

Coverage of the six dimensions of reading in grades K-3.

The Reading Excellence Act's definition of reading, which must be used by all schools that implement reading strategies under REA, is as follows:

"The term 'reading' means a complex system of deriving meaning from print that requires all of the following:

A. The skills and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to print.
B. The ability to decode unfamiliar words.
C. The ability to read fluently.
D. Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension.
E. The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print.
F. The development and maintenance of a motivation to read." Section 2252 (4)

Use of rigorous research when selecting reading instruction content and strategies. The REA requires that reading instruction be based on scientifically based reading research and includes a definition of this as follows:
"The term 'scientifically based reading research'

(A) Means the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties.

(B) Shall include research that-

i. Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
ii. Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
iii. Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers, and across multiple measurements and observations; and
iv. Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparatively rigorous, objective, and scientific review." Section 2252 (5)

This does not require selection of specific program models. In fact, most funded grantees in FY 1999 did not propose to select comprehensive models developed by others. Instead, funded states, districts, and schools will assess the reading research and identify specific content and instructional strategies to implement in grades K-3, with supporting family literacy activities for preschool and early elementary grades.

II. GEORGIA'S PLAN

Abstract

The national movement to improve reading instruction and learning recognizes that, while there is no single best design for the teaching of reading, scientifically based instructional practices are the keys to successful reading strategies and programs. Findings from the body of reading research reveal that reading instruction which includes phonological awareness, explicit, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension is most effective in improving the skills of students and the practices of teachers. Of these elements, the goal is always comprehension.

In 1996, Georgia began piloting a balanced reading initiative that includes phonological awareness, explicit, systematic phonics, fluency and reading comprehension. This initiative, Reading First, also provides teachers training in best practices in reading instruction. On the foundation of Reading First and other state related initiatives, the state of Georgia proposes a comprehensive plan to enable all Georgia children to read well and independently by the end of third grade in accordance with the Reading Excellence Act.

The Georgia Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites (***GA READS***) initiative is a comprehensive three-year plan that includes: Reading Improvement, Tutorial Assistance, and Family Literacy. The first year is designed for planning and disseminating best practices in scientific based reading research followed by two years of implementation for grantees. In addition to building upon the Reading First initiative, ***GA READS*** will incorporate another statewide initiative, The Family Connection. Family Connection was established in 1991 as a community-based approach to improve the lives of Georgia's children and families through grassroots planning and local decision-making. Family Connection, in all of Georgia's 159 counties effective July 1, 2001, is a state and local partnership to address children and family needs. These three components are designed to improve reading and reading instruction, assist reading improvement utilizing a one-on-one model, and facilitate the literacy development of families, respectively.

The purpose of ***GA READS*** is to establish 55-80 demonstration sites for reading research, instruction, and teacher training. These ***GA READS*** sites will serve approximately 120,000-175,000 children and their families and train approximately 1500-2000 teachers in the teaching of reading founded in scientifically based reading research as defined by the federal statute. ***GA READS*** will team local schools and their communities to understand and implement reading instruction, professional development and family literacy services based upon best practices found in scientifically based reading research through a comprehensive collaborative planning process. Each ***GA READS*** site will provide, under the guidance and coordination of a Literacy Coach/Professional Developer of scientific based reading research (SBRR), the facilitation and delivery of reading instruction grounded on SBRR. A part-time Family Literacy Facilitator will be provided in order to promote family literacy and parental involvement in schools where those services are not currently available.

Local ***GA READS*** schools will be required to submit a comprehensive plan which includes four required components including: 1) an instructional program grounded in scientifically based reading research and best practices found in *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* and *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read Reports of the Subgroups* 2) ongoing professional development; 3) a shared governance board; and 4) an evaluation component which assesses the effectiveness of the project's activities. The purpose of ***GA READS*** is to establish model demonstration sites for early childhood development, teacher training in scientifically based reading research and community collaboration.

Figure A

To ensure that all children at participating sites are able to read at or above grade level by the end of third

Objective 1: Implement school-based reading improvement programs for children in grades K through grade 3 using scientifically based reading research.
Objective 2: Provide additional extended learning support through before school, after school, weekend, and summer assistance to students in need.
Objective 3: Develop programs that specifically assist kindergarten students who are not ready for transition to first grade, particularly students experiencing difficulties with reading skills
Objective 4: Utilize research based evaluative tools and instruments to establish base lines prior to the beginning of the project and that chart gains as a result of the project relative to student reading performance.
Objective 5: Conduct early literacy intervention for children who are experiencing reading difficulties in order to reduce the number of children who are incorrectly identified as a child with a disability and inappropriately referred to special education.

To actively engage parents and children during the early childhood years to ensure that children learn to read as soon they are ready.

Objective 1: Expand the number of high quality family literacy services.
Objective 2: Provide early literacy activities and materials for families to enhance language development and pre-literacy skills for children ages 0-4 years.
Objective 3: Provide training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their young children and a full partner in their education.
Objective 4: Establish minimum parent participation levels during the first year of the project to involve parents as partners in early literacy activities.

To develop a research based professional development system that will assist reading teachers in the delivery of instructional practices which maximize reading gains for all students.

Objective 1: Identify research based professional development approaches focused on skill acquisition, demonstration and practice.
Objective 2: Provide training on instructional practices for current teachers and other instructional staff using scientifically based reading research, including findings related to phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension.
Objective 3: Promote the use of best practices in school and community-based programs by conducting an annual ***GA READS*** Best Practices Institute.
Objective 4: Provide technology training for teachers and families designed to help students learn through technology.
Objective 5: Develop a technology support system to aid teachers in the field with specific classroom challenges encountered.

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III. State Activities

State Leadership and Oversight

Role of Partnership in GA REA Grant Application

The Reading and Literacy Partnership was reconvened on May 2, 2001 to discuss planning for the State of Georgia's proposal for the Reading Excellence Act. The role of the Partnership was outlined as follows:

- After the completion of Phase I, members of the Partnership will participate in Phase II of the selection process for the Reading Improvement and Tutorial Assistance grants. Phase II of the selection process will involve site visitation and interviews with school personnel as well as district personnel to guarantee a commitment from all collaborative entities.
- The Partnership will be instrumental in providing input and feedback concerning Georgia's REA proposal.
- The Partnership has asked for an assessment and evaluation throughout the project with a report from each ***GA READS*** school to the Governor and the newly formed Office of Accountability concerning the failures and successes of the project to give guidance to legislative recommendations.
- The Partnership will make recommendations to the Governor's office as well as to the State Superintendent of Schools and the State Board of Education concerning the effectiveness of the Reading Excellence Act project.
- The Partnership, in conjunction with the Governance Boards that will be established for each ***GA READS*** school, will be involved in the refinement of the accepted grant proposals by determining ongoing professional development, budgeting, evaluation, and assessment.
- Representatives of the Partnership will visit ***GA READS*** schools to monitor progress and provide feedback.

The Reading and Literacy Partnership has had an active role in the development of Georgia's Application for the Reading Excellence Act grant. Partnership membership was expanded to foster greater collaboration among state entities. Members added were in the areas of Teacher Certification, Research and Evaluation from an institution of higher learning, and the Department of Family and Children's Services under the Department of Human Resources. Additionally, the Partnership, upon award notification decided to expand the Partnership membership to include one State Board of Education member, one non-teaching parent of a Title I child that would be affected by the grant, the Executive Director of the Georgia Early Learning Initiative (GELI), and the Director of the Office of School Readiness. There are twenty-eight members of the Partnership.

Reading and Literacy Partnership

Composition of Partnership

Roy E. Barnes
Governor
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(A)

Mary Jeanette Jamieson
Chairperson, House Education Committee
Committee Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(C)

Kathy Ashe
Ranking Member, House Education Committee
Education Committee
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(C)

Craig Dowling
Principal, Rockdale County
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(D)

Clara Keith
Title I, Federal Programs
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Pam Adamson
Director, Curriculum
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Cyndy Stephens
Director, Teaching Force Center
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Tammy Cobb
First Grade Teacher
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(H)

Debbie Henry
Director, After-School Program
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(I)

Robin Morris
Director of Psychology, GSU
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(2)(A)

Martez Hill/Deirdre Johnson
Governor's Office of Planning & Budget
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(A)

Gaytha Harris
REA, Program Manager
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Linda C. Schrenko
State Superintendent of Schools
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(B)

Richard Marable
Chairperson, Senate Education
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(C)

Charles Tanksley
Ranking Member, Senate
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(C)

Sandra Moore
Director, Atlanta Even Start
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(E)

Nelda Heatherley
Deputy Superintendent, Student Learning
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Susan Remillard
Reading First Coordinator
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

Debbie DeLoach
Parent
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(G)

Juanita Blount-Clark
Director, GA DFACS
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(I)

Marian Gamble
Director, Family Connection
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(I)

Carla Pettis
Director, C.W. Hill Volunteers
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(2)(E)

Bob Bonner
Director, Federal Programs
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(F)

David Davidson
Program Manager, Even Start
Sec. 2253(b)(2)(A)(d)(1)(I)

Joy Berry
State Board of Education

Susan Hausmann
Executive Director, GELI

Marsha Moore
Acting Director, Office of School Readiness

Shemika Branham
Title I Parent

Professional Development

The State will sponsor:

Annual scientific-based reading research Best Practices Institutes
Leadership Conference
Technical Assistance Workshops for applicants
Web based Literacy services for parents and teachers

Grants to Local Educational Agencies

The state will administer two separate grant competitions.

Local Reading Improvement (LRI)
The vision for the Reading Excellence Act in Georgia is the establishment of approximately 55 Reading Excellence Act Demonstration Sites (***GA READS***) for instruction, research and training founded in scientifically based reading research. The foundation of these schools will be professional development. Teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents and volunteers will be trained in strategies, methods and materials, comprehension research and diagnosis and correction based on the six dimensions of reading.

Tutorial Assistance Program (TAG)
The ***GA READS*** Tutorial Assistance grant will provide the Local Education Agencies with a general framework comprised of a set of required components that are based on scientifically based reading research. The goal of the tutorial Assistance grant will be to provide students with the instruction needed to enable them to achieve grade level reading performance as rapidly as possible. Tutorial services will be provided on a one-on-one basis.

IV. Timeline

October 2001

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Presentation-SBOE
- Build capacity with Partnership additions
- Application and Guidance Design
- Application Technical Assistance Workshops
- Planning-REA Best Practices Institutes
    - State Administration
    - Grant Competition, LRI & TAG
- Design and Establish web page for REA

November 2001

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Application Technical Assistance Workshops
- Planning-REA Best Practices Institutes
    - State Administration
    - Grant Competition, LRI & TAG
- Refine web page for REA

December 2001

- Best Practices Institutes
- Application Technical Assistance
- Hire and train REA staff
- Refine web page for REA

January 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Application Technical Assistance
- Training for Phase I grant reviewers (local/national)
- Statewide Technical Assistance
- State REA Staff training
- Design and Establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Application deadline
- Refine web page for REA

February 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Phase I-grant review (local/national)
- Program Evaluation RFP
- State REA Staff training
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Design and Establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers
- Refine web page for REA
- Statewide Technical Assistance

March 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Phase II-Grant Review/Site Visits
- State REA Staff training
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute

- Design and Establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Statewide Technical Assistance

April 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- REA Site Visits
- Presentation of GA READS sites to SBOE
- Assignment of sites to State Coaching Staff
- Program Evaluation Contractor selection
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Design and Establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Statewide Technical Assistance

May 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Design and establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Create vignette for parents & teachers for web
- Technical Assistance support for GA READS
- Statewide Technical Assistance

June 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Planning for summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Design and establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Technical Assistance for GA READS
- Statewide Technical Assistance

July 2002

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Complete planning and hold summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Design and establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA

- Technical Assistance for GA READS
- Statewide Technical Assistance

August 2002-June 2003

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Local site implementation for LRI & TAG
- Technical Assistance and Monitoring for LRI & TAG
- Design and establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Technical Assistance for GA READS
- Statewide Technical Assistance
- Leadership Conference
- Develop REA Newsletter
- Submit 1st year evaluation data

July 2003-June 2004

- Reading & Literacy Partnership meeting
- Planning summer REA Best Practices Institute
- Summer REA Best Practices Institute held-July
- Local site implementation for LRI & TAG
- Technical Assistance and Monitoring for LRI & TAG
- Design and establish a web based Reading Certification & Endorsement w/ professional providers on SBRR curriculum
- Refine web page for REA
- Technical Assistance for GA READS
- Statewide Technical Assistance
- Leadership Conference
- Publish REA Newsletter
- Submit 2nd year evaluation data (October)

V. Local Activities

The Partnership and State REA staff will assist and monitor each local school system receiving REA assistance. Each REA site will establish the following:

Local Governance Board
Professional Development Plan
Local Reading Improvement Initiative, and/or
Tutorial Assistance Program Plan

VI. Budget

Total Award	**$48,086,734**
Local Reading Initiative	**39,935,718 (.80)**
Tutorial Assistance Program	**5,746,678 (.15)**
State Administration	**2,549,338 (.05)**
Personnel & Professional Development	1,442,603 (.03)
Program Testing & Evaluation	961,735 (.02)

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